

How to Be an Active Reader

One misconception commonly held by students is that reading is a passive activity. Unfortunately, passing your eyes over words on a page does not automatically store the material in your brain. You have to work for it – coax the information into your memory by asking questions and taking notes. These strategies fall into one general method called active reading. In short, it means that you do something while you read to help yourself remember. The more you involve your senses while you read, the more active you are and the more information you will retain.

Highlight

There are many ways to read actively. The simplest way is to highlight or underline important information as you read. Highlighting should only be reserved for parts of the text that should be reviewed in the future and not information that is already known. You want to be able to refer to the text later and highlighting is your best tool for this.

Write As You Read (Free write, Note taking)

Another common method of active reading is to take notes while reading, ideally in a notebook designated for reading notes only. Some students shy away from this strategy, thinking it is too time intensive; however, time is saved in the end because the material only has to be read once if read correctly the first time. If you write while the material is fresh in your mind, you have a helpful written record to review for tests and writing assignments. Be sure to write down page numbers with your notes to help you quickly locate key bits of information.

Don't Get Bugged Down!

If you find yourself getting bogged down on text that is difficult to comprehend, write down the nature of the problem and move on. You can come back to it later if you have time. This strategy is particularly crucial to employ when taking timed tests such as the SAT or ACT where losing just one minute can be costly.

Keep Track of Details

Many successful students employ a hybrid of techniques that include highlighting, note-taking in a separate binder, and summarizing after pauses in the text. To ensure your success, you must develop a system that lets you quickly locate certain types of details. Writing key words in the margin of the page is one strategy. If studying from a library book, use Post-It notes to record details.

In summary, to read more effectively, identify what you want to learn from the material and use active reading strategies to help you. It takes practice to develop your reading skills. The more you use these strategies, the more successful you will become.

What is a good strategy to getting started with active reading? What if you are not allowed to write in the book you are using and annotate in the margins?

SQ3R reading method

SQ3R is a reading strategy formed from its letters:

Survey! Question! Read! Recite! Review!

SQ3R will help you build a framework to understand your reading assignment.

Before you read, Survey the chapter:

- the title, headings, and subheadings
- captions under pictures, charts, graphs or maps
- review questions or teacher-made study guides
- introductory and concluding paragraphs
- summary

Question while you are surveying:

- Turn the title, headings, and/or subheadings into questions
- Read questions at the end of the chapters or after each subheading
- Ask yourself,
"What did my instructor say about this chapter or subject when it was assigned?"
- Ask yourself,
"What do I already know about this subject?"
Note: If it is helpful to you, write out these questions for consideration.
This variation is called SQW3R

When you begin to Read:

- Look for answers to the questions you first raised
- Answer questions at the beginning or end of chapters or study guides
- Reread captions under pictures, graphs, etc.
- Note all the underlined, italicized, bold printed words or phrases
- Study graphic aids
- Reduce your speed for difficult passages
- Stop and reread parts which are not clear
- Read only a section at a time and recite after each section

Recite after you've read a section:

- Orally ask yourself questions about what you have just read, or summarize, in your own words, what you read
- Take notes from the text but write the information in your own words
- Underline or highlight important points you've just read
- Reciting:
The more senses you use the more likely you are to remember what you read Triple strength learning: Seeing, saying, hearing
Quadruple strength learning: Seeing , saying , hearing, writing!!!

Review: an ongoing process

This process leads to Active Studying!

Study Actively

- **Take notes:** When you're reading something that seems important, or when you're listening to a lecture or presentation, make that sure you take notes. To take notes, you have to be listening and engaged with what is being said. It's especially important to take notes in your practical classes. You might never see what is being demonstrated again.
- **Review your notes:** It's generally a good idea to go over your notes within a day or two of taking them. Notes when first taken are generally fairly rough, and often have missing information. If you rewrite them within a few days, it's not too hard to remember what you meant by what you've written, and to fill in the blanks from your memory of the lecture/class/etc.
- **Compare, compare, compare:** "Don't rely on any one source of information. Compare, compare, compare! Though different texts and supplemental materials may agree on all the main points (or not), they each speak in different voices, adding dimension to the subject matter and giving you a better grasp of the subject." (Fortune, 2008)
- **Apply it:** "If possible "apply" or experience aspects of the course material in everyday life. Visit a museum or historical landmark, do something "hands-on" that relates to what you are learning. It may involve volunteer work, viewing a masterpiece up close, strolling through a historical district or perusing a rare manuscript. Create an adventure out of it and become part of the action. The world can be your lab." (Fortune, 2008)